



King County

## Citizens' Advisory Commission on Homeless Encampments

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**CACHE Public Hearing**  
**Tuesday, July 13, 2004 7:00 p.m.**  
**Tukwila City Hall Council Chambers**  
**Summary of public testimony**

**Commission Members Present:** Bill Kirlin-Hackett and Holly Plackett (co-chairs), Janna Wilson, Linda Weedman, Paul Fischburg, Dini Duclos, Sandra Kortum, Chaplain Al Patterson, Rev. Harriett Walden, Shane Davies, Susan Rynas, Doug Stevenson, Rhonda Berry, Judy Schnebele, Steve Pyeatt, Bob Santos, Alan Painter, Robert Thompson, Capt. Carl Cole, Tony Lee

**Commission Members Absent:** Ron Swicord, Bill Hobson

**Staff Present:** Sherry Hamilton, Jackie MacLean, Patrick Vanzo, David Wertheimer, Carole Antoncich

**Speaker 1 – Seattle.** Believes there is a desperate need for tent cities as well as for other types of housing. She stands vigil with the Women in Black, and they stood for another person who died homeless just last week. Commented that there are more and more homeless people, and tent cities are places where people can be safe, leave their belongings, and that they help people get a leg up in society. Doesn't care if they are on private or public land, but would like the government to streamline requirements to make it easy for them to exist.

**Speaker 2 – Bellevue.** There is a need for additional beds for homeless people, and encampments provide for security and a sense of community. The fact that they are self-governing encourages community spirit. They provide more independence for people, and security for belongings. Couples can stay together. Commented that there is a need for more public education about who is homeless to combat peoples' fear of the unknown. Believes that homelessness is a public problem, so encampments should be on public land.

**Speaker 3 – Seattle TC3.** Said that tent city is a clean and secure place for homeless people, and should be on public land.

**Speaker 4 – Seattle TC3.** Said he finds tent city to be a very welcoming place. Believes that they should be on public land so they can stay for longer periods of time. It is difficult to move every 90 days or less. Commented that people shouldn't "judge a book by its cover." There are good and bad folks in every walk of life. Tent City is one of the best places he's been.

**Speaker 5 – Bothell TC4.** Without Tent City, he might not have survived.

**Speaker 6 – Seattle.** Tent City is needed because many people are still sleeping outdoors and some of them are dying. We all share public land, including the homeless.

**Speaker 7 – Bothell TC4.** Commented that he has seen lots of people in Tent City who have never been out on the streets before and thank God for Tent City. Encampments are a place to put belongings; you can't go on a job interview with a bag over your shoulder and expect to be taken seriously. Consent agreement with the City of Seattle has worked very well for 4 years. Believes public land should be used now because there would be only one landlord to talk to, plus the possibility of longer stays. Stress of not knowing where they're going to go next is hard on folks.

**Speaker 8 – Seattle TC3.** Stated Tent City has helped him get his life back together and he is now in drug treatment. Public land would help give them stability in one place for a longer time. Cost of moving Tent City is high.

**Speaker 9 – Maple Valley.** Her church is preparing to host Tent City for the 5<sup>th</sup> time. She supports partnership, using both public and private land. Churches have been a beginning. She believes that the real issue is that all of King County needs to have the political will to put resources into affordable housing and necessary services. Homelessness is a problem of all humanity, not just Seattle. She pointed out that a homeless person was murdered just this year in Maple Valley.

**Speaker 10 – Bothell TC4.** There are too many homeless people. The consent decree has worked fine in Seattle and it should work for the County also. Supports the use of public land, and thanked those in Bothell who have supported Tent City4.

**Speaker 11 – Seattle TC3.** Believes that public land should be used for encampments because it is more permanent. It is hard on people who work to move all the time, and can cause some to lose their jobs.

**Speaker 12 – Bothell TC4.** Tent City offers much more stability compared with living in shelters. You can go out and find work without having to wait in lines. Tent cities need to be on public land. Churches can't do it all. The system will collapse if overburdened. Longer time in one place is important, and public land could offer this.

**Speaker 13 – Seattle TC 3.** Works as waiter/bartender. Tent City allowed him to come in at 11 or 12 so he could keep working. Lots of people want to get out of homelessness and Tent City provides this help.

**Speaker 14 – Seattle.** Co-Chair Interfaith Task Force on Homelessness and Pastor of Church of Mary Magdalene, a church for homeless women. Strongly supports tent cities. Also believes that they add security to a neighborhood, rather than presenting a danger. The "spirit of neighborly watchfulness" is an asset to any community. Supports use of either public or private land for homeless encampments.

**Speaker 15 – Seattle.** Described himself as a staunch supporter of both tent cities, and of providing affordable housing for all who need it. Commented that he is “grimly aware” of rising tide of homelessness. In 1978, homelessness was somewhat of an anomaly. His parish hosted Tent City and the experience was very successful for both the church community and for the residents of Tent City. Homelessness is on the increase. Encampments are not the permanent solution but they are a good temporary solution.

**Speaker 16 – Bothell TC4.** She said that she appreciates Tent City because they offer bus tickets and safety of belongings that allow both her and her husband to go to work every day. While people are still dying on the streets tent cities are needed. Both public and private land should be used. Churches have been helping for 5 years, and now it’s time for public land. She believes that using public land will allow a longer length of stay.

**Speaker 17 - Seattle.** Was formerly homeless and remembers being scared all the time. She works to end homelessness and to serve homeless people in many ways. Tent City is a way for people to connect to services. It keeps people alive to use the shelters and services.

**Speaker 18 - Seattle** – Believes that it is important to “spread (homeless) people out.” They shouldn’t live in a group as in Tent City because it calls attention to them and makes people hate them. We need to find them jobs, give them the help they need and move them on. There is no need for tent cities.

**Speaker 19 – Renton.** Does not support the use of public land for Tent Cities. Believes that “If you build it they will come.” She commented that homeless people have heard that Seattle is a good police, so they come here and use public resources. Commented that there is a need for “tough love”- we shouldn’t enable homeless people through tent cities.

**Speaker 20 – Redmond.** Believes that currently Seattle is viewed as a good place for homeless and this reputation draws homeless people. We need to gain the reputation of not enabling this population. Public land should not be used for homeless encampments. Believes in rights of churches and private individuals to use land within the bounds of law, but if private land used, a public hearing should be held since this use has an impact on the neighborhood.

**Speaker 21 – Tukwila.** Commented that homeless advocates never seem to want to distinguish between those who want to get ahead and those who just want to sit around in tent cities. We shouldn’t shuttle these folks (tent city residents) from city to city. Supports leaving them permanently in Seattle. Commented that Seattle is known as a “gravy train” very generous to homeless people.. Believes that it does not help homeless people to put them in tents. Also said that there are problems in current tent cities even though you don’t hear much about them except by listening to people calling in to radio talk shows. Believes that we need permanent solutions, not tent cities.

**Speaker 22 – Seattle.** Said that he is not currently homeless, but he pays rent of \$800 a month on an income of \$1200 month, so he’s not sure whether or not he will maintain housing in the long term. Believes that people are free to move around; Seattle doesn’t have any control over

## Summary of public testimony

July 13, 2004 – Page 4

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that. Homeless people move for the same reasons other people do. Homelessness is solvable in America but there is a colossal misallocation of resources. 130 million dollars per day is being spent in Iraq. If we were to stop the war for a few hours, we could solve the entire homeless problem in all of King County. Added that many homeless people are veterans and our country's thanks to them is homelessness. Everyone needs/deserves a decent place to live.

### Summary:

From	
Seattle	7
Redmond	1
Renton	1
Bellevue	1
Maple Valley	1
Tukwila	1
<u>Tent City Residents (Bothell and Seattle)</u>	<u>10</u>
Total:	22